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# West Michigan Winter Sports Phenomenal

## See No Letup in Record Growth of Ski Centers

GRAND RAPIDS-- The story of winter sports in West Michigan is a record of phenomenal growth.

From a few scattered ski centers and winter parks a short generation ago, the winter recreation industry has expanded to two score centers today, with no signs of a letup.

Predictions of a few years ago that winter business would contract to a few major areas has not been borne out as year after year the list of West Michigan centers has grown, even though some early developments have dropped out.

In 1950, when West Michigan Tourist Association instituted its weekly snow reports, there were only five major skiing centers on the west side of Michigan. Boyne Mountain, first complete public winter resort in the state, started operation in 1948 and Briar Hill at Mesick and Elberta Ski Area made their bow about a year later. Sugar Loaf in the Leelanau peninsula had been a weekend area several years, and Cadillac's Caberfae, already a noted ski center, had been a pioneer since 1937, though not a lodging resort. Two tentative ventures, Shussaway at Lowell and Mad Cap near Cadillac didn't make the grade.

Also on the ground floor were Echo Valley, tobogganing-skating center at Kalamazoo since the mid 30's, and popular winter play spots like Petoskey Winter Park, Newaygo Winter Park and Ionia's Brock Park. But that was about it.

There was a ferment of winter activity under way, however, In the early 50's Hickory Hills and Holiday Hills (now Traverse City Holiday) made their debut in the Traverse area, with Missaukee Mountain at Lake City and Mt. Mancelona also joining the list. In 1955, Harbor Highlands near Harbor Springs, Lake Valley at Kalkaska and Manistee Ski Area (now Big "M") started operations followed in 1956 by Brady's Hills at Lakeview, Ward Hills near Branch, Glacier Hills at Bellaire and Mt. McSauba at Charlevoix.

Three top ski centers made their debut in 1958 when Nub's Nob at Harbor Springs, Walloon Hills near Walloon Lake and Thunder Mountain at Boyne Falls joined the parade, while Buck Hills, southeast of Beulah, supplanted Elberta.

Growth continued in 1959 as the Ludington Ski Area, Goshorn Hills at Saugatuck and Pleasant Valley at East Jordan opened. Indian Hills in Grand Rapids and Hu-Lu Heights at Hudsonville became popular toboggan centers.

Crystal Mountain took over Buck Hills in 1960. And in 1961 the list expanded with Bear Hills at Bear Lake, Birch Hills near Big Rapids. Grand Haven Snow Bowl, Eskar at Middleville and Little Switzerland (now Swiss Valley) west of Three Rivers. Chimney Corners at Frankfort and McGuires at Cadillac got into the act as winter rendezvous in 1962.

While Goshorn, Ludington, Lake Valley and Birch Hills faded, there was no recession as 1963 saw inauguration of swank Shanty Creek at Bellaire, Moon Ridge at Lakeview, Pando near Rockford, Carousel at Holland, Timber Ridge near Plainwell and Binder Park at Battle Creek.

Last year saw fabulous Boyne Highlands rise on the site of Harbor Highlands while Sugar Loaf was revived after a couple years of idleness. Timber Lee and Maplehurst also started operations in the Traverse area.

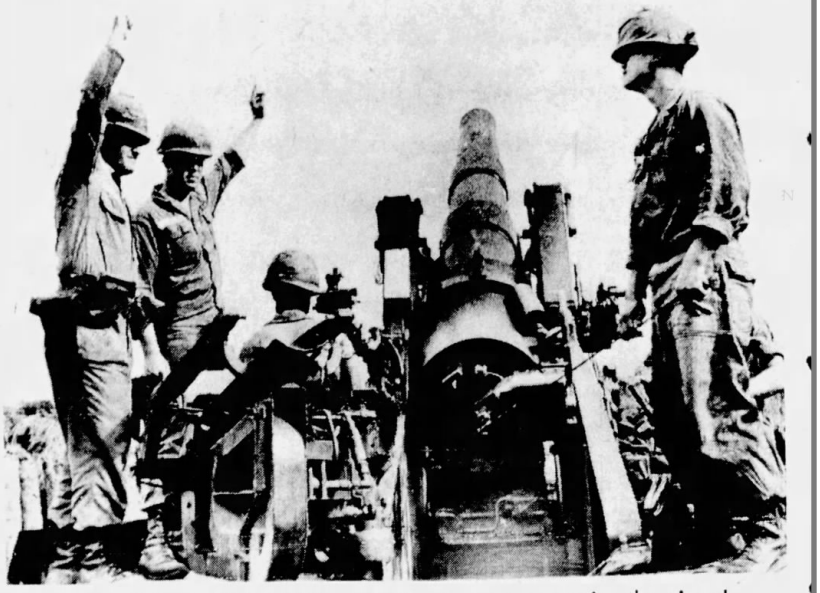
This year a new ski development at Cannonsburg and another tobogganing center at Fry's Park east of Kalamazoo are bidding for favor although Hickory Hills has reverted to a municipal status only.

Growth of the winter industry has not been only in numbers. Most of the centers which have made a go of it have continued to expand with new lifts, snow makers, more slopes, better facilities and accommodations and better services. And the number of skiers has increased from a few thousand to tens thousands. And there's no recession in sight.

## Postal Rate Increase Seen

WASHINGTON (UPI) -- Postmaster General Lawrence F. O'Brien just might be angling for an increase in postal rates.

O'Brien indicated Wednesday in a speech at the National Press Club he might seek an increase. He said one is under consideration because of costly improvements planned in mail service.



KANACK, S. VIETNAM -- A U. S. gunner awaits the signal to fire a 175 mm self-propelled howitzer in support of the First Air Cavalry Division. This is the largest gun of the "First Cav" artillery. (UPI Radiotelephoto.)

# No Astronomical Explanation at Hand in Christmas Star Mystery

The mystery of the Christmas star brings popular interest to a peak during December, but no satisfactory astronomical explanation is at hand.

University of Michigan Astronomer Dr. Hazel M. Losh says the narrative about this star is too incomplete, the date of its appearance too uncertain, and the early calendar too unreliable, to lead to any definite conclusions.

One reasonable explanation advanced, Dr. Losh points out, is that he "star" reported to have guided the Wise Men may have been a conjunction or close grouping of bright planets.

"Some bright planets are visible now, and they are always promising and alluring. In looking for a symbol of the reason, Venus well fills the bill."

This year Venus is in an especially favored season, says Dr. Losh. "A striking light in the southwest for about three hours after sunset, this planet is steadily growing brighter, reaching its greatest brilliancy December 21, just a few hours before the Sun arrives at the winter solstice, and three nights before Christmas Eve."

The crescent moon on the evening of December 25, Christmas night, will be located five degrees below Venus, adding to the striking spectacle of this bright planet. In addition, Jupiter will continue to dominate the night sky, rising in the east soon after sunset and shining the whole night through. (It reaches opposition December 18, arriving at the meridian at midnight, best time for observation.)

"A close grouping of planets in the year 7 B.C.--with Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn--meeting in the constellation of Pisces (The Fishes) could have had some real significance in the early church," Dr. Losh believes.

"Such an arresting figure most certainly would have drawn the attention of the astrologers, who would have been looking for a sign in the heavens, and who would have attached mystical meaning to the appearance."

Winter will officially arrive at 8:41 p.m. Tuesday, December 21, when the Sun will reach its southern-most point of the year, called the winter solstice.

## Missing Ballot Causes Tie

MIDDLEVILLE (UPI)-A missing ballot caused a tie vote in a millage election which will have to be held again in February, Earl Van Sickle, superintendent of schools, announced Tuesday.

A proposed 6.5 mill operational tax for two years for the Thornapple Kellogg School District Monday ended in the tie vote, 184-184.

But the election record showed 369 votes were cast and a search failed to turn up the missing ballot, forcing the deadlock and another election.

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